



CONNECTICUT AFL-CIO

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Testimony before the
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Tuesday, February 24, 2009

Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the Labor and Public employees committee, my name is Lori Pelletier and I serve as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, which has over 900 affiliated local unions representing the working men and women from every one of our 169 cities and towns.

I am here to testify in opposition of the following proposed legislation:

S.B. No. 222 (COMM) Labor and Public Employees. AN ACT CONCERNING THE TIP CREDIT

and **H.B. No. 6460 (RAISED) Labor and Public Employees. AN ACT CONCERNING TIP CREDITS AND GRATUITIES.** We oppose both of these bills because this penalty against workers whom rely on this income to support their families should not exist.

As this economy continues to contract, workers in the service industry particularly wait staff and bartenders will be hit the hardest. This is really an unfair tax on those workers and should be eliminated not enhanced. Maybe we should call for a "tip credit" on incomes over \$150,000/ year. Or maybe an increase in the "tip credit" on capital gain income, or better yet maybe we should double the cost of licenses and fees but just call it a "tip credit". Let's call a spade a spade and the tip credit is a regressive tax on some of the lowest wage earners in our state.

We also oppose, **S.B. No. 804 (RAISED) Labor and Public Employees. AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL BINDING ARBITRATION.** Binding arbitration does just what it is intended to do; it resolves contracts without going through a lockout or strike situation. If it's not broke don't fix it.

H.B. No. 5248 (COMM) Labor and Public Employees. AN ACT CONCERNING THE LEGISLATURE'S IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT IN THE STATE. This bill is not getting at the problem of job creation in our state. For a number of years the labor community has asked for stronger enforcement provisions when companies are given state grants and loans. If we are truly concerned about job creation then we need to focus on education, training, infrastructure and quality of life issues.

Finally we also oppose **H.B. No. 6333 (RAISED) Labor and Public Employees. AN ACT CONCERNING THE COLLECTION OF EMPLOYEE DNA.** At the very least this is an invasion of privacy and at the worst it could be used to discriminate against workers. Forensic science doesn't need this to be successful, but this could be used to hurt workers, and for that reason we are opposed.

We support the following raised bills:

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S.B. No. 362 (COMM) Labor and Public Employees. AN ACT CONCERNING EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK.

In 1963 the Equal Pay Act was signed into law. Unfortunately there is a difference of 22.2 cents for every dollar earned less for women than their male counterparts. In our minority communities these numbers are even starker. This difference is not limited to just women who are not college educated. As shown in a 2008 report which points out "the median annual earnings of Connecticut women who have a four-year degree or more are \$55,000. Vs. \$77,000 for men in similar circumstances." It's time for Connecticut to stand up for women in the workplace and pass this legislation.

S.B. No. 365 (COMM) Labor and Public Employees. AN ACT CONCERNING CAPTIVE AUDIENCE MEETINGS. In 2007 **employers spent \$8 Billion** on attacking workers who were deciding to form a union with their coworkers. In 92% of these union certification drives the employers forced employees to attend these "captive audience" meetings. Workers were threatened, harassed and in many instances fired just because they wanted the right to belong to a union at work. We also saw during the 2006 and 2008 election cycles, employers holding "captive audience" meetings to tell employees who to vote for in those November elections.

- This bill prohibits employers from coercing employees into attending political, religious, or labor organizing meetings, and it is necessary **because there is no existing law prohibiting these coercive meetings.**
- It also prohibits the discharge or discipline of an employee for refusing to attend mandatory company meetings in the workplace for other than company business.
- Does not limit employers free speech on any subject, it would allow workers to return to their jobs and not be subjected to intimidating or harassing situations.
- 18 state legislatures are considering bills that would protect workers freedoms in the workplace. (*Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Washington, Wisconsin and West Virginia*)

Attached is a copy of Attorney General Blumenthal's testimony before the Judiciary Committee on March 14, 2007. (In 2007 HB 7326 was submitted and is this year submitted as SB 365) In his written statement he addresses the issue of "federal preemption". I encourage the members of this committee to support this legislation, Connecticut workers are counting on it.

H.B. No. 5521 (COMM) Labor and Public Employees. AN ACT ELIMINATING CREDIT REPORTS AS A BASIS FOR EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS. Credit reporting is neither an exact science nor a fair one. The average person is not aware of how this system really works, so why employment should be tied to this secretive

and exploitive practice. It discriminates against younger workers, women and those whom may have recently had minor financial difficulties. This bill is good government for working people.

S.B. No. 733 (COMM) Labor and Public Employees. AN ACT CREATING A CIVIL ACTION FOR A CONSUMER REPORTING AGENCY REPORTING A PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEE'S ERASED CRIMINAL HISTORY. We all know the problems associated with credit reports and the damage misinformation can cause, this legislation would provide for legal challenges to an agency that reports information that was legally erased.

H.B. No. 5515 (COMM) Labor and Public Employees. AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL ORDINANCES ESTABLISHING WAGE AND OTHER STANDARDS FOR CONTRACTORS. When tax dollars are given out there should be strings attached. In its simplest form when municipalities give incentives aren't they a type of stimulus, or bailout? Allowing localities the discretion to do this makes sense.

H.B. No. 6187 (RAISED) Labor and Public Employees. AN ACT MANDATING EMPLOYERS PROVIDE PAID SICK LEAVE TO EMPLOYEES. Whether it's MRSA or the common cold the idea that workers are unable to stay home when they are ill is not a positive reflection on our state. Paid sick time is a family values issue.

Thank you to the Committee for holding this public hearing and if you have any question I'd be happy to address them.